



Department of Justice

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CHILD PORNOGRAPHY SENTENCES HIGHLIGHT INTERNET DANGERS TO CHILDREN

Parents Warned to Watch out for Their Children – Predators Warned to Watch out for Law Enforcement

United States Attorney Matt M. Dummermuth, Iowa Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force Coordinator Michael Morris, Assistant Linn County Attorney Nicholas Maybanks, Cedar Rapids Police Assistant Chief David Johnson, Marion Police Chief Harry Daugherty, United States Postal Inspector Troy Raper, and Federal Bureau of Investigation Supervisory Senior Resident Agent Craig Sorum announced today the sentencing in four separate cases involving sexual exploitation of children and child pornography. (See accompanying press releases.) Three of the cases were prosecuted as a part of the U.S. Department of Justice's Project Safe Childhood initiative.

"We are here today to warn two groups of people – parents and sexual predators," Dummermuth said. "Parents need to watch out for their children – predators need to watch out for us."

"Parents need to know the dangers their children face on the Internet, especially now that kids are out of school for the summer. Sexual predators are scouring the Internet for children and can use sites like Myspace and Facebook to learn about and make contact with your child," said Morris. "Properly used, the Internet is a wonderful resource, but many predators improperly use it to prey on children."

"We are also here to warn would-be sexual predators and child pornography offenders. Federal, State, and Local Law Enforcement are united in our aggressive efforts to investigate and prosecute these offenders and obtain long prison sentences," said Dummermuth.

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For example, DAVID EVAN STARR, 45, from Marion, Iowa, was sentenced to 60 years in federal prison for sexually exploiting minors he met on the Internet. STARR met 16- and 17-year-old girls over the Internet and persuaded them to take and send to him sexually explicit pictures and videos of themselves. Two of the girls were from Arizona, one was from Illinois, and one was from New York. The victims testified they spent hours communicating with STARR either on-line or on the telephone. Agents searching STARR's home and office found printed copies of website profiles for scores of minors and young women. STARR had taken notes on the profiles as he communicated with his victims and kept files on them.

"Parents must talk to their children about the dangers on the Internet. We teach our children to cross the street safely. We should do no less when it comes to safe use of the Internet. Children should be told that by following certain rules, they can help protect themselves while 'surfing the net,'" said Dummermuth.

Dummermuth advised parents to tell their children to:

- Never post their name, address, telephone number, school name, parent's name, or any other personal information.
- Never post or send pictures of themselves without permission from their parents.
- Never agree to meet face to face with someone they've met online without permission from their parents.
- Never respond to messages that have bad words, talk about their bodies, or seem scary or strange.
- Always tell their parents if they find something scary or threatening on the Internet.

Dummermuth said parents should also monitor their children's access to and use of the Internet. Parents should:

- Monitor their children when they're online and monitor the time they spend online. Keep the computer in a common area of the house. If a child quickly changes the screen or becomes uneasy or defensive when a parent walks into the room, this could be a sign that the child is involved in something he or she should not be.
- Make sure access to the Internet at school and at friends' houses is monitored by adults.
- Watch for unexplained changes in their child's behavior or attitude.

- Watch for unusual telephone calls or mail addressed to their child.
- Save any threatening e-mails or pornographic material received by their child and provide it to law enforcement officers.

“Our children are children of the Internet age, but they are still children,” said Dummermuth. “They need to be protected from those who seek to victimize them. By working together, we can make the Internet a safer place for all children.”

The U.S. Department of Justice’s Project Safe Childhood initiative is a joint effort of federal, state and local law enforcement, along with community leaders, designed to protect children from online exploitation and abuse. Led by the U.S. Attorneys Offices, Project Safe Childhood marshals federal, state and local resources to better locate, apprehend and prosecute individuals who exploit children via the Internet, as well as identify and rescue victims. For more information about Project Safe Childhood, please visit www.projectsafechildhood.gov. For more information about Internet safety, please visit www.netismartz.org and www.fbi.gov.